

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CONAKR 01521 282034Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
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PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 PC-01 AID-05 OPR-02
/054 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO SECSTATE WASHCD 3407 NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY BISSAU

C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 1521

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, MOPS GV

SUBJECT: PEOPLE VS. POLICE: MARKET WOMEN MARCH - SITREP ONE

1. SUMMARY. STREET VIOLENCE, UNKNOWN IN CONAKRY SINCE 1970
INVASION, FLARED SPONTANEOUSLY DURING AFTERNOON AUGUST 27 BETWEEN
POLICE AND MARKET MOB. CAUSE OF OUTBURST WAS ACCUMULATED PUBLIC
RESENTMENT OVER CHRONIC FOOD SHORTAGE, HIGH PRICES, AND
SHAKEDOWNS
AND HARRASSMENT OF MARKET WOMEN, TRADERS AND CONSUMERS BY
ECONOMIC POLICE CHARGED WITH RESTRICTING PRIVATE COMMERCE UNDER
1975 DECREES. MANY POLICE POSTS SACKED; SOME POLICE INJURIES;
MARKET WOMEN MARCHED ON AND ENTERED PRESIDENTIAL PALACE
COURTYARD.
AS UNIFORMED POLICE WERE WITHDRAWN OR HID FROM CROWD, NATIONAL
GENDARMARIE TROOPS MOVED IN TO KEEP ORDER. AT HASTILY CALLED MASS
MEETING AUGUST 28 IN STILL UNPUBLICIZED SPEECH, PRESIDENT TOURE
REPORTEDLY TOOK TOUGH LINE AGAINST PROTESTERS. P.P. AUGUST 28
SPORADIC GUNFIRE HEARD THROUGHOUT CONAKRY -- GENDARMERIE, NOW
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GUARDING VIP HOMES AND KEY GOVERNMENT SITES, SEEN FIRING IN AIR
TO DISSUADE FURTHER MARCHING. AT DUSK AUGUST 28,
TOWN QUIET; ALL U.S. PERSONNEL AND, AS FAR AS IS KNOWN, OTHER
FOREIGNERS UNHARMED AND IN NO DIRECT DANGER. END SUMMARY.

2. SPONTANEOUS MOB PROTEST WAS TRIGGERED ABOUT 1200 AUGUST 27 WHEN ECONOMIC CRIMES UNIT OF BLUE-UNIFORMED POLICE TRIED TO CONFISCATE FOOD

FROM MARKET WOMEN AT CONAKRY'S MEDINA MARKET. WOMEN BEAT UP SEVERAL POLICEMEN. DEMONSTRATION SPREAD WHEN MARKET RESENTMENT BOILED UP INTO ATTACKS ON OTHER POLICEMEN AND POLICE POSTS; STRAGGLING MARCH, AT LEAST HUNDREDS, ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESS-- MOSTLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN-- HEADED DOWNTOWN TOWARD PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. LOOTING OF POLICEPOSTS CONFIRMED POPULAR SUSPICIONS OF CORRUPTION -- STOCKS OF RICE, CLOTH AND OTHER SCARCE ITEMS WERE CARRIED OFF. CROWD SPILLED PEACEFULLY INTO PRESIDENTIAL COURTYARD WHERE, REPORTEDLY, SEKOU TOURE ON BALCONY ATTEMPTED TO LEAD THEM IN "DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM"CHANT; WOMEN RESPONDED DISRESPECTFULLY INSTEAD, "DOWN WITH ECONOMIC POLICE." SOME CRIES AGAINST FAVORED ECONOMIC SITUATION OF POLITICAL ELITE WERE

REPORTEDLY HEARD. TOURE ALLEGEDLY TOOK CONCILIATORY APPROACH AND PROMISED MASS MEETING NEXT DAY; NO FORCE WAS USED AT PALACE. BY NIGHTFALL, UNIFORMED POLICE HAD DISAPPEARED, MANY INTO CAMP BOIRO, GENDARMERIE HAD PUT UP CHECK POINTS/ROAD BLOCKS, AND EXCEPT FOR ISOLATED LOOTING, DOWNTOWN, CITY WAS QUIET. APC WAS SEEN GUARDING APPROACH TO PRESIDENT'S BELLEVUE RESIDENCE.

3. TOURE CONVOKED MASS MEETING OF ALL CONAKRY "MILITANTS" AT PEOPLES' PALACE AT 1000 AUGUST 28. LARGE CROWD SPILLED OVER INTO STREETS AND PARKING LOT OUTSIDE. ALTHOUGH MEDIA DID NOT BROADCAST SPEECH, TOURE ALLEGEDLY TOOK HARDER LINE, THREATENING TO ARREST OR EXECUTE DEMONSTRATORS MONDAY AND REFUSING DIALOGUE WITH MARKET WOMEN (EMBASSY HAS NOT CONFIRMED THIS). MEETING APPARENTLY BROKE

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UP INCONCLUSIVELY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE KHAKI-CLAD TROOPSBEGAN INTERMITTENT

FIRING IN AIR PROBABLY BLANKS, ALL AFTERNOON TO DETER ANYFURTHER MARCHING TOWARD PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, AS MARKET WOMEN REPORTEDLY TRIED AGAIN TO DO. DURING DAY, TWO TANKS AND NUMEROUS TROOPS GUARDED PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, AND GENDARMERIE WERE CONCENTRATED AT MARKETS; CENTRAL MARKET WAS IN VISIBLE DISORDER AFTER EVENTS. FEW REPORTS OF EXECUTIONS OR SHOOTINGS ARE UNCONFIRMED RPT UNCONFIRMED.

TANKS WERE PULLED OUT ABOUT 1600, LEAVING ONLY ONE ARMORED CAR. AT 1800 GMT AUGUST 28, GUNFIRE HAD DIED AWAY AND CITY WAS AGAIN QUIET, WITH KNOTS OF INDIVIDUALS AND A FEW PROVATE CARS MOVING ABOUT. ALL U.S. EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND, AS FAR AS KNOWN,

OTHER FOREIGNERS, ARE UNHARMED AND IN NO DIRECT DANGER.

4. COMMENT: CHICKENS ARE COMING HOME TO ROOST FOR PRESIDENT TOURE'S DYSFUNCTIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES. THIS IS FIRST OUTBURST EVER OF POPULAR DISSATISFACTION OVER POOR RESULTS OF POST-1975 STATE BAN ON PRIVATE COMMERCE AND MISERABLE CONSUMER SUPPLY SITUATION, ALTHOUGH DISSATISFACTION HAS LONG LAIN BENEATH SURFACE AND INDEED WAS BEHIND MINISTERIAL-LEVEL DISSENT WHICH LED TOURE TO STAGE DIALLO TELLI PLOT PURGE IN SUMMER 1976. THIS DISTURBANCE IS BLACK EYE FOR LEADER PRIDEFUL OF INTERNAL ORDER ELAN, AND DISCIPLINE BOUGHT AT PRICE OF ECONOMIC INTERNAL MUDDLE. RADIO CONAKRY HAS SO FAR IGNORED EVENTS; TOURE AND HIS IDEOLOGICAL AUTHORITIES ARE PRESUMABLY STILL UNDECIDED HOW TO PLAY THEM TO PUBLIC. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT MIX OF CARROT AND STICK TOURE WILL USE TO GET PAST SITUATION, BUT HE WILL AT VERY LEAST LOSE CONSIDERABLE FACE.

5. ADDITIONAL SITREPS WILL FOLLOW AS SITUATION WARRANTS.
MAINLAND

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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Sent Date: 28-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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